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United Nations
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
FORTY-EIGHTH SESSION

Official Records

14th PLENARY MEETING

Monday, 4 October 1993 at 10 a.m.

NEW YORK

President: INSANALLY
(Guyana)

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

ADDRESS BY MR. MELCHIOR NDADAYE, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BURUNDI

The PRESIDENT *(interpretation from French)*: The Assembly will hear an address by the President of the Republic of Burundi.

Mr. Melchior Ndadaye, President of the Republic of Burundi, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The PRESIDENT *(interpretation from French)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Burundi, His Excellency Mr. Melchior Ndadaye, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President NDADAYE *(interpretation from French)*: It is with genuine pleasure that we speak from this United Nations rostrum and join previous speakers in sincerely congratulating you, Sir. I do so on behalf of the people and the Government of Burundi and on our own behalf. It is in recognition of your distinguished qualities that the Assembly has chosen you to preside over its work at this session. We are convinced that your wisdom and your political and diplomatic experience will enable you to guide the work of the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly in a masterly, successful way.

We also congratulate the other members of the Bureau of the General Assembly.

We wish also to pay a well-deserved tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Stoyan Ganev, for the skill and vision with which he guided the work of the Assembly at its forty-seventh session.

Further, we express our gratitude to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for the vision with which he has guided the Organization and for his tireless efforts to ensure the maintenance of international peace and security.

The Republic of Burundi warmly welcomes the countries that have recently joined the United Nations family; we welcome the representatives of the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Eritrea, the Principality of Monaco and the Principality of Andorra.

The people and the Government of Burundi join the rest of the international community in conveying sincere condolences to the Government and the people of India on the earthquake that has struck their country and that has caused the death of some 20,000 people. We assure the people and the Government of India of my country's sympathy and moral support in this harsh ordeal inflicted by Nature.

The people of Burundi, through me, is honoured and pleased to send a message to the international community represented here in the General Assembly. That message, which is being delivered on the morrow of the victory of democracy in our land, is one of peace, friendship, fraternity and solidarity.

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ENGLISH

The beginning of this century was marked by devastating wars that led to the crystallization and bipolarization of international relations. The ensuing cold war, with the two major ideological and military blocs in confrontation, was reflected in many countries by the establishment of totalitarian power. Africa, which was at the same time emerging from the long night of colonialism, found itself unwillingly involved in the dynamics of that rationale. Peoples who had theoretically been freed from the colonial yoke nevertheless found themselves, to their great consternation, confronted with authorities that had been imposed upon them or established by force, and that were devoid of any legitimacy, just like the colonial order that had theoretically been brought to an end.

In that context the rights and freedoms of the human person were openly flouted. The State based on law became a mirage, the right to life and the growth of the human spirit a utopian ideal. In their concern to consolidate their power, which lacked any popular base, some leaders inflamed and exploited inherent differences based on ethnicity and regionalism, which they imbued with political significance.

Our country did not escape that state of affairs. The past 30 years have been marked by ethnic upheavals that have traumatized our people. In truth, the history of the people of Burundi is replete with tragedies. Political forces have exploited ethnic differences with impunity and have fought to control the State for their own interests.

Outright crimes against humanity have been committed by individuals and by organized groups, some of which have enjoyed the protection and blessing of the State, which lent itself to the perpetration of such base actions. That sowed mistrust and suspicion among the ethnic groups in our country, thus traumatizing the people and creating unease about the future. So violent did the tragedy become that there were those who wondered how Burundi would ever manage to emerge from the toils of the violence in which it had become enmeshed.

Burundi's recent political development demonstrates its people's ability to shake off those toils and to rid themselves from their fears.

The ideology of human rights and its corollary, democracy in the management of public affairs, have taken the place of violent, repressive and exclusionary measures to such a degree that the people of Burundi have gradually come to realize that in order to solve their problems they must turn to a democracy that transcends differences, divisions and hatreds.

We made a choice. Today, we are more than ever convinced that that choice was a good one. The people of Burundi embarked upon this process, at first hesitant but confident, with of course the inevitable ups and downs, and they succeeded in holding free, just and open elections.

Today, the people of Burundi are proud, proud of having managed to overcome the many difficulties and obstacles strewn on their path towards democracy and proud too of being able to take full control over their history in an open, just and equitable way.

The date of 1 June 1993 will remain a memorable one in our country's history. On that day, for the first time in Burundi's history, free, pluralist and open elections were held, designed to give the country truly democratic institutions. The positive manner in which the various protagonists have accepted the people's verdict demonstrates that the people of Burundi are henceforth convinced that the path of democracy - and especially in its electoral aspect, in which the people's will is expressed and legitimacy conferred - is the only proper way to resolve the problems entailed in the access to and exercise of power.

Further, the legislative elections of 29 June 1993 were to confirm the will of a people desirous of living henceforth in peace.

We should like to take this opportunity to extend heartfelt thanks to all who, from near or far, supported our country in its march towards democracy. We have greatly appreciated the material, technological and financial support provided by friendly countries and international and intergovernmental organizations that have enabled us to organize in a suitable manner Burundi's first free, pluralist elections.

The democratic administration of a society we are now in the process of undertaking cannot be viewed as an end in itself. Rather, it is a means to consolidate peace, to strengthen confidence among the various components of our nation and to accelerate the economic, social and cultural development to which all men aspire.

Today, therefore, the Government of Burundi is bending every effort to achieve the gradual elimination of all the obstacles that have paralysed or retarded the Burundi people's drive towards growth and overall

development. We are working towards this end, and we are convinced that with the support of the international community we can meet the challenge.

It is at present our most heartfelt hope that the people of Burundi will henceforth be safe from ethnic confrontations. We want no more blood shed in ethnic confrontations anywhere in the land, in the homes, in the hills, in towns and provinces, in schools and barracks. Never again! That is the watchword of the whole of the people of Burundi.

We also want the people of Burundi to accept their history as it is. Mistakes have naturally been made, and there are other serious problems that continue to weigh on our democratic process. Nevertheless, they must not obstruct or paralyse us. Setbacks and problems exist to be overcome. Mistakes must be recognized as such and corrected. That is one of the basic tenets for a new Burundi.

Yes, we must accept our history the better to face the future. We want that future to be a safer and securer one for all. Thus, the Government we formed following the elections last June is an open Government. In it, we have brought together people from every ethnic group, from every region of the country and of different political persuasions.

All those people from every social background and differing political persuasions are working together with might and main to ensure that the process of democratization in Burundi will be irreversible. We consider that to be the best way to reach our goal, namely, to reconcile the people of Burundi with themselves and with their State the better to commit themselves to the battle for their economic, social and cultural development.

Guided by that will, the Government has just proposed, and the National Assembly has ratified, an amnesty law under which more than 5,000 of our compatriots - 70 per cent of our country's prison population - are to regain their freedom and thereby take part in building a democratic Burundi, confident and more integral.

We wish to tell the world that through that amnesty law the people of Burundi mean to make a new start towards a better development of their destiny and the installation of peace in the subregion.

While granting amnesty to those who, at home or abroad, have derogated from the fundamental rights of the people of Burundi as a whole and of individual members of that people in particular, we want to accept our history without thereby becoming its prisoners. Through a national pardon, we want to establish a context of security for all those in Burundi who, in their hearts or in the eyes of the nation, are responsible for acts committed in the course of past tragedies. Indeed, given the tragic acts our people have known, sometimes the result of shared responsibilities but often arising out of imprecise causes, we must wipe the slate clean. We must view the future with greater clarity, confidence and serenity. That is a solid basis for domestic peace, but it can also contribute to the restoration and optimum consolidation of security and peace in our subregion.

The happy outcome of democracy in our country has thus become an unprecedentedly powerful catalyst in the settlement of another thorny problem affecting our subregion. I refer to the question of refugees, of whom there are some 200,000. These compatriots who are victims of tragedies of the past three decades and who have been forced to stay in exile, seeking refuge in neighbouring countries here and there throughout the world, have had their hopes rekindled. For them - and they are perfectly right - the triumph of democracy has removed the essential reason for their leaving their country. Today they have chosen to return to their homeland, which welcomes them with open arms.

Before talking about the conditions that will have to be met before these compatriots can be assured of a safe return, I should like first to discharge the duty of thanking all countries, particularly our neighbours Tanzania, Rwanda and Zaire, and all the international organizations, especially those in the United Nations system, and in particular the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), that for some 20 years have enabled them to continue to feel like human beings.

The Government of Burundi must now continue this process by ensuring the happy return and the effective and dignified reintegration of these citizens into the country's economic, social and cultural life. To succeed, we shall have to mobilize many material and financial resources to meet emergency needs and satisfy long-term requirements. We make an earnest appeal to the international community to provide such support as we engage in this highly humanitarian process.

We are faced with a massive and spontaneous return of Burundi refugees from neighbouring and distant countries. We are honoured and filled with joy at the confidence and spontaneity of our compatriots. At the same time, lack of the means and the infrastructure that we need to cater for them causes us deep concern. We are now identifying in detail all the steps that will have to be taken if we are to organize, before next December, a conference to inform sponsors to help finance this large-scale operation.

In the meantime, we are using the modest means at our disposal, while relying on national solidarity and, especially, on the laudable intervention of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to whom we again express our deep gratitude. Pending the establishment, in the receiving areas, of a medium-term plan for the gradual repatriation and reabsorption of these returnees into a global, integrated development programme, we have just published an emergency plan to deal with the arrival of 50,000 people between now and February 1994. The latter, because of the precariousness of their conditions, are returning right away. This will enable us, having secured the necessary means, to alleviate their suffering and to accord them the dignity to which they are entitled.

In the economic field, our major concern is to ensure a just and appropriate link between human, natural and financial resources so that we may provide the goods and services to satisfy the constantly increasing needs of our population. Development of the rural sector will require special attention from the public authorities, given the fact that more than 90 per cent of our population live in the countryside. We want to modernize the rural economy, and the spirit of enterprise, self-improvement, research and creativity will play a very important part in the economic approach of the new era.

A conference of donors to help finance Burundi's sixth five-year economic and social development plan will be organized in the near future. We believe that the international community will give us its usual support and that the resources necessary for implementation of the plan will be forthcoming.

Moreover, the Government of Burundi will pursue the structural adjustment programme, with the support of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Development of the private sector will be encouraged, and non-strategic public enterprises will be progressively privatized, either in terms of property or in terms of management.

Within the framework of liberalization of the Burundi economy, the Government will reinforce the free-trade zone for the purpose of diversifying exports. We invite investors who are so inclined to come and operate in Burundi, where the current political and social environment, the free-trade zone and the investment code are very favourable to business.

In the social and cultural field, we shall promote the work ethic and ingenuity and, thereby, commit ourselves to positive values, in keeping with our traditions and culture.

As we have already pointed out, democracy in Burundi is a living reality that has to be consolidated. This new political situation will change relations between Burundi and its foreign partners. That is why, henceforth, my country's foreign policy will be based on the following guiding principles: good-neighbourliness and effective cooperation; non-interference in the affairs of other States; the consolidation of peace through respect for and the promotion of the rights and freedoms of the human person; mutually advantageous international cooperation based on interdependence and solidarity between peoples and nations; regional integration against the background of the emergence of free-trade zones in which there is no place for selfish national purposes; and, finally, integration of the Burundi economy into the world economy.

We believe that respect for these principles will not only strengthen the determination of the Government of our country to implement a foreign policy in keeping with the demands of its domestic policy but also foster harmonious relations with our foreign partners.

We realize that, without development, there can be no healthy democracy. Democratization is therefore a continuing process, a process that never ends - to the extent that it is not enough to create or reform political institutions; that it is especially necessary to resolve substantial problems, particularly those related to health, nutrition, education, housing and people's general well-being.

Solutions must be found for these problems, but at the same time we must confront challenges linked to them - for example, population growth, the steady drop in the prices of raw materials, the poor performance of our economies, the weight of external debt, natural disasters

and endemic disease, especially malaria and AIDS, which have become a real scourge, principally in Africa.

The survival of democracy on our continent will depend on our achieving a just balance in international economic relations. The security and stability that are indispensable if sound democracy is to be guaranteed will remain under threat so long as the problems of debt and hunger - in a word: development - are not attacked head on.

The international community would therefore be failing in its duty were it to permit the gap between the prosperous countries of the North and the poor countries of the South to remain indefinitely. Thus, we appreciate the various initiatives to reduce the burden of foreign debt on the developing countries. We believe that economic recovery in Africa will be achieved, in particular, when external debt is substantially cancelled and additional financial resources provided. Is it right that financial flows from the South to the North should be greater than those from the North to the South, as is the case today? This is a bitter reality, which requires of us profound changes. Thus, the United Nations must do all in its power to rethink cooperation machinery, with a view to coming up with a solution that will reverse the tendency towards the impoverishment of Africa in particular.

Despite the problems we have just mentioned, we must not allow ourselves to be discouraged. Our efforts at democracy and development go hand in hand with a sincere search for regional solidarity, in the first place, and then for international solidarity. We know full well that, while imposed choices are intolerable, it would be an aberration if we were to fail to act together. It is by combining and harmonizing their forces that States can make the best of their advantages. Burundi must not stand aside from this movement towards solidarity. In our subregion, Burundi will commit itself to the promotion of various types of cooperation with its neighbours.

We intend to strengthen existing instruments in the context of that cooperation, such as the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries, the Kagera River Basin Organization and the Preferential Trade Area, with a view to the gradual establishment of a free-trade zone. The Government of Burundi will spare no effort to spark subregional cooperation aimed at increased well-being for our peoples.

It is high time that we in the third world engaged in some self-examination. It is high time that we grew out of looking only outwards. We must explore our own capacity for self-development: development directed at ourselves and maintained by ourselves. We must learn to plan and manage better. Above all, we must learn to work better, to work profitably: all of us, from the humblest peasant to the loftiest dignitary. Africa is overflowing with wasted or unexploited potential. We must contemplate a development for ourselves, a development adapted to our needs and making use of our assets. International solidarity can be effective only in the radically new context where we take responsibility for ourselves and where exchanges are mutually advantageous.

The world is radically changing. Peoples aspire to greater freedom and dignity. Mankind needs to make enormous efforts to overcome the obstacles on its path: poverty, war, famine, sickness, the destruction of the environment, overpopulation. These are all challenges facing our planet.

The detente and the will for peace that characterize relations between the major Powers following the cold war can make it possible to achieve global security, understanding and cooperation; they affect the need for political settlements of the conflicts that have broken out in many parts of the world. Burundi advocates dialogue and joint efforts to end disputes, and we can only welcome these positive developments in international relations.

But internationally speaking we are at the turning point between two eras. The era of the cold war and a bipolar world has ended. But today the world is newly assailed, and the inevitable seismic shock waves are shaking the global village. Peoples and nations everywhere are seeking new guidelines for building the new world order that has been so late in coming.

Ancient rivalries we thought had been overcome are again rising to the surface and are disturbing balances achieved at great cost. On the threshold of the twenty-first century, Europe has been jolted by separatist nationalism. The plan to build a communal supranational political entity is not exempt from the harsh test posed by the eruptions taking place in the multinational States of the long-standing democracies. The situation in the former Yugoslavia speaks unfortunate volumes in this regard.

Africa is being undermined by areas of disturbing destruction. It has been all the more marginalized since the end of the division of the world into two blocs because it is no longer a bargaining chip. Where else in the world are there so many countries without State authority,

without social organization? Where else are there so many fratricidal wars with no solution in view? Somalia, Liberia, Angola, Mozambique and Rwanda are all loci of tension where instability threatens Africa as a whole, as well as world peace.

Burundi firmly supports the resolution of conflicts in the framework of regional and subregional organizations. Hence, we praise the efforts of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and subregional organizations in Africa to arbitrate conflicts and help the parties to find negotiated solutions to their disputes.

In connection with the prevention of conflicts and with confidence- and security-building among the States of our subregion, we have established a permanent consultative committee on security questions in Central Africa, with the cooperation of the United Nations. In the committee meetings already held, a common determination has emerged to establish a confidence-building machinery, and to limit weapons in order to benefit the development and well-being of the peoples of the subregion.

Moreover, Burundi welcomes United Nations action, which despite many difficulties continues to play a role and to achieve success. A recent example is that of Cambodia, where a Government of National Unity has just been formed after a long process carried out under United Nations supervision. The United Nations is doing all it can to restore order in Angola, Somalia and the former Yugoslavia. We urge the United Nations to proceed on this path.

We hail the historic agreement recently signed at Washington between the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization. This development is an important milestone in the settlement of the Palestinian problem. Burundi attaches great significance to this event, which without question will set its stamp on the end of the century.

Closer to home, in Rwanda, Burundi hails and supports action taken by the United Nations in cooperation with the Organization of African Unity to guarantee our Rwandese brethren a climate favouring genuine national reconciliation. The deployment of a neutral international force, as requested by the two parties, should be arranged as quickly as possible. Such a force is among the prerequisites for the consolidation of peace in Rwanda, and hence throughout the subregion - especially in Burundi, where similarities in ethnic, linguistic and cultural matters place us in a delicate position with respect to the Rwandese political conflict.

Burundi also welcomes the positive developments in the situation in southern Africa. Negotiations under way among the various political players in South Africa have already produced encouraging results that are strengthening mutual trust. The Government of Burundi was pleased by the decision of the Conference for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) recognizing that Walvis Bay and the surrounding area belong to Namibia. That decision marks the total independence of Namibia and is in keeping with the consolidation of peace in the region.

That is true also of the decision in South Africa to set up a Transitional Executive Council open to all political groups; this will lead to elections next year.

Burundi enthusiastically welcomes the recent events in South Africa that enabled the historic leader of the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC), Mr. Nelson Mandela, to call for the lifting of economic sanctions against his country. Burundi considers that those events are the culmination of the first phase of a process that will lead to the emergence in South Africa of a democratic regime free of racial discrimination.

Burundi hopes that the Transitional Executive Council will be able to complete negotiations on the transition to democracy. That would open new prospects not only for southern Africa but also for the entire continent, which in recent years has followed with special attention the obstacles preventing all the daughters and sons of Africa from enjoying their national rights, thus compromising the entire network of mutually advantageous relations that could be developed between South Africa and the rest of the continent.

Concerning the difficulties facing our Organization, it is an open secret that we are facing financial adjustment problems. The number of peace-keeping operations, the frequency of special missions, the diversity and the complexity of prevailing situations all call for greater responsibility in the payment of assessments due the Organization.

Burundi also encourages the current restructuring of the United Nations system, which will allow it to measure up to the numerous new tasks awaiting it and enable it to have an image which is a true mirror of the present world.

Our country praises the exceptional courage and self-denial demonstrated by the staff of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. It goes without saying that refugees and displaced persons endure the most painful sufferings because of conflicts. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees constantly gives them hope by providing them with the basic necessities.

Burundi, as a country that has been sheltering refugees but that also has citizens of its own living in exile, can testify today to its convictions and achievements on the question of refugees. We are convinced that only the repatriation and reinstallation of refugees and displaced persons can remedy the problem, which has become worldwide in scope and difficult to overcome.

We would be remiss not to congratulate the non-governmental organizations of the world, which, through their actions, have lessened the suffering of millions of men, women and children in distress.

In order to be lasting and irreversible, the democratic reforms chosen by our populations must have international support, because, indeed, democracy against a backdrop of social unrest, unemployment and poverty runs the risk of being just a caricature.

From this rostrum, in the same way that we called on the international community to witness our democratic institutions, we would like to ask it to support our efforts through international cooperation based on interdependence and solidarity among peoples and nations.

The economic situation in the world today constitutes for us a subject of deep concern. The developed countries have been hit by a recession, and it is not easy to overcome it. After years of more or less favourable economic conditions, growth in their economies is now slowing down. Short-term projections are not very encouraging either. Unemployment has reached disturbing proportions, thereby causing a resurgence here and there of xenophobia and micronationalism, victims of which are for the most part foreigners who have become true scapegoats for the ills that are distressing the societies in the developed countries.

The developing world is the most severely affected in terms of the well-being of its population. While South-East Asia and Latin America have positive economic indicators, we must note that Africa is going through a difficult period and that the stakes are high. The drop in export earnings, linked to the undervaluing of raw materials, weighs heavily upon the external debt that today so hinders the freedom of action of most African countries. The outlook for recovery and growth in the short term will likely remain bleak for the African continent.

We would like to recall, however, that there have been delays in the implementation of the New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, adopted by the General Assembly two years ago. Similarly, progress achieved in implementing the New Agenda for the 1990s in favour of the least-developed countries is still not up to the expectations of our populations.

The International Conference on African Development is currently being held in Tokyo. We sincerely thank the organizers of that meeting, especially the Government of Japan. We wish that Conference success, and we also hope that it will lead to concrete commitments on the part of the donors to help us recover and to develop on the basis of our own needs and priorities. Burundi is represented in Tokyo at a high level, and it will make its contribution to achieving the goals of that Conference.

Obstacles to healthy international economic cooperation are still numerous and of many kinds. The external debt crisis remains a major hindrance to the recovery of our economies. The main creditors must make greater efforts to ease the weight of this debt, the servicing of which is a heavy burden on the meagre export earnings of our developing countries. At this time, we would like to express our deep gratitude to friendly countries which have already undertaken measures - or are in the process of so doing - to reduce or cancel the debt which we owe them. We ask them to take relevant measures to give a strong boost to development financing, the drying up of which concerns us.

In this regard, Burundi places great hope in traditional sources of financing, the funds for which have been increased. But we also place great hopes in the Global Environment Facility. Our delegation would like from this rostrum to repeat the need for rapid conclusion to the negotiations on the restructuring of that fund so that it may reflect its true world calling with regard to its composition and to transparent management and democratic management in its functioning. Similarly, it is also important for the Commission on Sustainable Development to move from rhetoric to an operational phase.

The series of General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) negotiations ought to have been concluded in 1991, but they continue to run up against a number of

disagreements which are causing major concern in the world economy, in particular with respect to the future of the multilateral trading system. We urgently appeal to the principal protagonists to show political will sufficient to bring about a favourable ending to the Uruguay Round. The international community would in no way benefit from a trade war. There would be no winner and no loser in that war.

Each year the United Nations enjoys greater participation at the level of Heads of State and Government. This is due to the fact that they firmly believe in the irreplaceable role of this Organization in respect of the balance and functioning of the world. We firmly believe in this Organization, and therefore we permit ourselves the liberty of hoping for the promotion of international cooperation which takes account of the diversity of each country and which is committed to complementary actions with shared and fully assumed responsibility.

The United Nations indeed is an Organization of powerful countries and weaker countries. Here, therefore, we find the principles of justice, transparency and solidarity in international affairs as something which must be respected, so that no State need feel excluded or bullied because of its size. Rather, each State should feel protected against insecurity and arbitrariness, against hunger, against poverty, against epidemics of all kinds.

It is true, and we strongly emphasize this, that the weaker countries must not always put forward their weakness as a pretext to demand or to call for protection or assistance from the international community. They too must take charge of their own destinies. They must organize themselves in such a way that the United Nations or other organizations would intervene only to give them support for a self-centred and self-supported development programme.

It is our deepest wish that this world Organization that we share would continue to pursue its ideals and to achieve its goals. We would wish that international solidarity might be a genuine reality and that the relations among States might henceforth be based on a more just and more equitable economic and political order.

It is our hope to see our Organization help the poorest populations on our planet avoid hunger, poverty and wars.

Long live the United Nations!

Long live international solidarity!

The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Burundi for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Melchior Ndadaye, President of the Republic of Burundi, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

AGENDA ITEM 127 (*continued*)

SCALE OF ASSESSMENTS FOR THE APPORTIONMENT OF THE EXPENSES OF THE UNITED NATIONS (*A/48/414/Add.4*)

The PRESIDENT: I should like to draw the General Assembly's attention to document A/48/414/Add.4. In a letter contained in that document, the Secretary-General informs me that, since the issuance of his communications dated 21, 24, 27 and 29 September 1993, the Central African Republic has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

PROGRAMME OF WORK

The PRESIDENT: Before calling on the first speaker in the general debate this morning, I should like to draw the attention of the General Assembly to document A/INF/48/6, which contains a tentative programme of work and schedule of plenary meetings for the month of October. I should like to point out that this schedule was prepared with a view to ensuring that the relevant documentation would be available to delegations ahead of the discussion of any given agenda item.

The lists of speakers for all the items listed in document A/INF/48/6 are now open.

I will in due course announce the dates of the consideration of other agenda items as well as keep the General Assembly informed of any additions or changes.

I should like to remind members that, while the Assembly fixed Monday, 19 September 1994, as the date

for closure of the forty-eighth session, it also fixed Tuesday, 21 December 1993, as the date on which the Assembly will recess until next year.

I hope to keep as close as possible to this schedule so that the Assembly can discharge its responsibilities in an orderly fashion. I therefore appeal to those representatives submitting draft resolutions to do so sufficiently in advance of the dates fixed for consideration of items in order to give members adequate time to examine them.

I should also like to remind representatives that at its 3rd plenary meeting, the General Assembly took note of the fact that, depending on the type and complexity of proposals involving changes in the work programme and additional expenditures, the preparation of a statement of programme-budget implications by the Secretary-General could take a few days and that, in addition, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee would need adequate time to review the programme-budget implications of a draft resolution before the latter could be acted on by the Assembly.

Further, the Assembly took note of the fact that it was therefore desirable that Member States submit proposals involving statements of programme-budget implications in sufficient time to avoid cancellation of meetings and postponement of the consideration of items.

AGENDA ITEM 9 (*continued*)

GENERAL DEBATE

Mr. ROBAINA GONZALEZ (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I come from a free, small and sovereign island in Latin America. My ancestors were able to shed the yoke of a colonial empire and achieve an independence that, since the moment of its birth, has been burdened by the interventionist impositions of a foreign power. I belong to a people that was able, for several generations, to forge an authentic revolution, which also opened the path to hope for other peoples of the Third World.

For these reasons, and as a Caribbean people, we are doubly proud of having you, Mr. President, presiding over this session. Because you are a son of that South that makes us brothers, we are convinced that that world and its hopes will not be ignored once again. In that just aspiration you will certainly find Cuba's support.

Conditions in the world have radically changed in less than five years. Bipolar balance is being replaced by unipolar hegemony. The world is increasingly plagued by still insuperable contradictions between words and deeds. While it is said that the threat of a nuclear holocaust has disappeared, the poverty and underdevelopment that cause misery and death are continuing. Millions of men, women and children die every day, with no possibility of being saved. It is said that the arms race between the super-Powers has ended but, increasingly, there is a rush to develop new weapons systems and even to introduce them to outer space.

Today, the warlords aspire to rule the skies without having resolved many of the problems on Earth. Paradoxically, they argue that they lack the resources to do so, while the world today is becoming increasingly ungovernable because of them. The total budget of the World Health Organization equals the expenditures caused by three hours of the arms race. How can hunger in Somalia be alleviated, for example, if for every dollar used to feed the hungry, $10 are spent on the maintenance of military operations in that country?

The existence of treaties on a partial ban of nuclear tests and on a moratorium, or on the non-proliferation of such weapons, is not enough. A single agreement would suffice, one providing for general and complete disarmament and for the use of the enormous resources that would thus cease to be squandered for the final resolution of our planet's serious problems.

Regrettably, the end of the cold war has not resolved any of the fundamental problems facing humankind; instead, it has created many others. The sacred principles of independence and national sovereignty are being shredded to pieces, and are guaranteed only to a few powerful countries whose views prevail even in this lofty Organization. The United Nations was created, among other objectives, for the achievement of a lasting peace, justice and equality in international relations. Some things have been done, but much remains to be done for the benefit of human beings and of peoples.

While the longstanding problems of the Third World persist and become more acute, aggravated by stagnation in development assistance, what peace can we speak of? While unequal exchange, external debt and the transfer of resources from developing to developed countries - to mention but a few examples - still persist, will there truly be peace? While protectionist and discriminatory practices in international trade prevail, and the terms of trade of

developing countries continue to deteriorate, will we honestly be able to achieve justice?

Only through effective cooperation, radically restructuring present international economic relations, would poor nations be allowed to develop and to grow. The initiatives adopted by the Organization by consensus are countless yet we continue to be ignored by the most powerful countries.

The new international economic order, three international development strategies, four United Nations development decades, at least four special sessions of the General Assembly, a number of conferences on population, environment, habitat, and even the Rio de Janeiro Conference itself exemplify hopes placed by peoples the world over in the United Nations, but without tangible results. The selfishness and lack of political will faced by the poor of this Earth, the children of colonialism, racism, plundering and foreign intervention, are truly disappointing.

On the other hand, neo-liberal doctrines are now rampant in the assistance programmes of the Organization, proclaiming only the virtues of the market and of private enterprise. Defending only these options means separating populations of developing countries from the real production of wealth. This accentuates the inequalities, attacks true democracy, social development and the right of human beings to achieve a productive and dignified life.

We the countries of the South are no more than statistics to the North. Meticulous studies are carried out to determine that we will be born in greater numbers, that more of us will fall to disease and that more of us will die.

The quality of life of the generations that have been born and have died while I speak would demand that those bulky files where tragedies are noted in detail, would also have the power to feed and heal the needy. Simply knowing that we are dying in the countries of the South on this planet will not prevent us from being buried.

The surviving third world has once again placed its hopes in the preparation of an agenda for development and is awaiting with interest the Secretary-General's report on the subject. A new frustration would be a luxury for which we would never be forgiven by this suffering humanity.

The World Summit for Social Development to be held in 1995 will also provide us with a new opportunity to place human beings at the centre of the United Nations efforts, and to give this subject the priority it deserves in the work of the United Nations.

The world we live in is condemned to a gradual destruction that can only be stopped by our collective wisdom. The right to life, the most basic of human rights, is constantly threatened by the progressive deterioration of the ozone layer, by the pollution of the environment and its underground and surface waters, by the exhaustion of arable land and by the constant increase in the legions of the undernourished and underemployed. This dehumanizing cruelty is the result of what is mistakenly called contemporary industrial civilization. Together with these lacerating realities, humanity is facing other challenges which, though different, are no less complex.

Recently, the World Conference on Human Rights concluded by reaffirming the universality, interdependence and indivisibility of those rights. That Conference rightly reiterated that the issue must be dealt with in an objective, impartial and non-selective manner.

Attempts are made to say that the majority of violations of human rights originate in the impoverished countries of the South, while an overwhelming majority of their accusers come from the affluent countries of the North. It seems that those who claim to be the resolute defenders of certain individual freedoms, also include among those freedoms, and with equal ease, the violence that increasing neo-fascist and racist currents are unleashing in their own societies.

Has that North not been the source, and now more than ever, of discrimination against migrant workers, against the increasingly dispossessed strata of society and against national minorities?

Who are the main beneficiaries of the trade in human organs? Where are the deviant practices of pornography and child prostitution, of drug addiction and the sale of minors, most common? Are these by chance the individual freedoms they defend with such zeal? Why are they not equally intransigent in defence of the right to eat, to work, to learn, to live a healthy life, to not suffer discrimination by reason of sex or race, in other words the most basic rights of a human being?

We all recognize the responsibility of the United Nations in the field of the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with the United Nations Charter. There are United Nations bodies that can

adequately carry out this responsibility if attempts are not made to assign them functions with which they are incompatible, if they are allowed to work objectively and without political conditions, and if they are based on cooperation and not imposition. This role must not and cannot be distorted. Thus, the idea of creating a high commissioner for human rights should be considered with all necessary care and without undue haste, which we could in the future regret.

In a similar context, those who reap benefits from the existing international order are introducing into it their own ideology. They are trying to impose those norms of political, economic and social organization most likely to preserve that order and irrationally defend their ideas regarding the links between democracy, human rights and the market economy, a new trilogy that masks the sufferings of millions of persons.

It is necessary firmly to reject any and all attempts to decide unilaterally on these issues of vital interest to all peoples, and avoid their becoming new sources of conflict, new obstacles to international cooperation and the unifying role that humanity today expects of the United Nations.

In order to fulfil the purposes enshrined in the United Nations Charter and to allow the Organization to contribute to ensuring peace, cooperation and development, it is urgent to democratize the United Nations.

This would facilitate the finding of solutions to the malformations with which the United Nations was born and with which it developed, and its transformation into an Organization devoted to truly strengthening cooperation among peoples. It is not acceptable that at the dawn of the twenty-first century, the United Nations continues to respond to the interests of a handful of Powers.

The United Nations has not been and is not democratic. A veto privilege linked with the might of States is inadmissible, above all if the Security Council can become a docile instrument in the hands of a few Powers, a risk which is present now more than ever before. There is nothing more insecure in this world, and I say this in all sincerity, than the Security Council.

The full democratization of the Security Council would require, among other measures, that all its members be subject to periodic democratic elections, as is now the case with non-permanent members. It would also require the elimination of the veto privilege and the establishment of a single category of members, which would be consistent with the principle of the sovereign equality of States that must become, once and for all, the cornerstone of the activities of the Organization.

We are, nevertheless, conscious of the obstacles that at present prevent us from achieving that objective, and we consider it not only feasible, but indeed indispensable, to progress in that direction.

The number of peoples present in this Hall has almost quadrupled since 1945. It is therefore necessary to institute a new order in the United Nations.

Cuba favours an increase in the membership of the Council to reach a proportion, with respect to the total membership of the United Nations, that is as close as possible to that existing in 1945, and favours also a tripling of the number of permanent members so that Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa and Asia would have more than two seats in that category, as is now the case for Europe. Suffice it to say that more than 3,700 million inhabitants of those continents, that is, two thirds of humankind, do not enjoy that privilege.

It is also essential for the principle of equitable geographical distribution to be ever present in the Security Council, and not only among the non-permanent members but among the totality of its membership. By so doing, we would be advancing one step farther towards democratization of the Council's membership.

It is also indispensable to modify the operational mechanisms of the Council and eliminate the practice of so-called informal consultations, thereby increasing transparency in the work of the Council. This is a need that the Secretary-General recognizes in his latest report on the work of the Organization. By the same token, it is not permissible for the Council to go beyond its mandate and interfere in fields that are not within its purview.

The adoption of measures to ensure greater participation by the General Assembly on issues to do with the maintenance and strengthening of international peace and security, as a means for achieving the necessary balance between the Assembly and the Security Council, cannot be postponed. We cannot disregard the fact that, under the Charter, the General Assembly is the only truly universal body in the United Nations and that this gives it special responsibilities. The Security Council acts on behalf of all the Member States represented in this Hall and is accountable to them. This accountability should therefore be implemented through substantive and

analytical reports from the Council to the General Assembly that would allow the Assembly not only to systematically consider and assess the Council's activities, but also to formulate necessary recommendations.

There is undoubtedly a general will to revitalize the Organization, but this objective should be achieved through the fullest and most transparent consultations, guided, above all, by the decisions taken by Member States.

Certain recent initiatives that, without any consultation or mandate whatsoever, attempt to reinvent the priorities of this Organization are cause for concern. There are even proposals that seem to consider the United Nations as a supranational body with a Secretariat acting as a universal government, and implementing actions that not only lack an appropriate legislative basis, but also confer on it prerogatives that are far removed from its legitimate nature. We call the Assembly's attention to the dangers involved in these attempts because, if their acceptance is forced through, they would cause serious conflict that could endanger the very integrity of the Organization.

Attention should also be called to the implementation of certain new ideas and mechanisms in the United Nations. Even if the resolutions regarding the report entitled "An Agenda for Peace" were adopted unanimously in this Hall, their implementation is not free of dangers that could jeopardize the most sacred principles of the United Nations. Nothing in those texts can justify violations of the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of States or interference in their internal affairs.

The excessive multiplication in the number of peace-keeping operations and related procedures is also cause for increasing concern. The proliferation in this type of operation is no indication that the United Nations is functioning better today than in the past; quite the contrary. In any case, it is a symptom of the grave dangers that threaten world peace and stability.

The resulting financial burden that is falling on the shoulders of Member States is reaching unsustainable proportions. Hence, we must prevent this increase from becoming even more onerous for Member States, and in particular for those of the third world.

In the last decade of the millennium, our world nevertheless does show some rays of light. One of these is that shed by the Ibero-American Summits, the most recent of which was recently held in the Brazilian city of Salvador da Bahia. I mention this as a valid example of fraternal discussion, in which, without anything being imposed by any party, issues of common interest were defined and coordinated.

Recently also, the world learned of the signing of the Declaration that, as a preliminary measure, recognizes Palestinian autonomy over part of the occupied territories. We hope that this development constitutes an effective step towards the restoration of the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to have their own State, in their own national territory, and towards the definitive withdrawal by Israel from the other occupied Arab territories, including Jerusalem. This would be an important contribution to a definitive solution to the Middle East conflict and to the establishment of a just and lasting peace in that troubled region.

Only a few days ago, in the Special Committee against Apartheid, my delegation had the honour of hearing Nelson Mandela. We are encouraged by his confidence in the future, and we hope that the process of dialogue now under way will be conducive to the establishment of a united, democratic and non-racial South Africa. We are ready to contribute, with our modest efforts, towards that end.

In my country, a genuine revolution succeeded. Since the outset, it has faced hostility from its neighbour but, against all odds, it has been able to carry out, in solidarity, its humane task. We have continued our endeavour even now that international circumstances have radically changed. Cuba is inserting itself into the world economy and is opening up to foreign investment, but without the loss of any of its principles. In order to continue to safeguard the development of our people, we are also making profound changes based on the concept of preserving our independence and the gains we have already achieved. We are indeed facing serious problems as a result of an inhuman blockade, but we nevertheless continue to hold a prominent place in the fields of health, education and social security, which are guaranteed for all even in the midst of all our difficulties. The results of these efforts have been recognized this year by the United Nations and by the United Nations Children's Fund.

Attempts are being made to crush this dream. The General Assembly, at its last session, adopted resolution 47/19, regarding the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. The resolution was welcomed by international public opinion. Since then, there has been an impressive rise in world-wide solidarity

towards our country, from every part of the world, from the most diverse sectors and creeds, even in those wide swaths of the population of the aggressor country that reject the measures taken by their own Government. Sympathy has increased for a people that for more than three decades has managed to resist a ferocious siege by a huge, neighbouring Power, with admirable gallantry in the midst of unimaginable deprivation. Nevertheless, in open defiance of the decision taken by the General Assembly and in defiance of world opinion, the blockade has been reinforced during the last few months by means of regulations cruelly implementing to the utmost the same laws rejected by this forum less than a year ago.

The extra-territorial nature of the blockade has increased, and the pressures are on the rise. Actions have multiplied to impede or affect the links with Cuba of private and public economic entities in third countries. They aspire to defeat by hunger and disease the exemplary nation which they have not been able to vanquish by force or by siren songs.

It must be difficult for the illustrious representatives of that great northern nation still to sustain today the thesis that their actions constitute a bilateral embargo, in the face of the irrefutable evidence that in fact those actions constitute a blockade.

We have provided the Assembly with irrefutable evidence of their ambition not only to maintain but also to strengthen the blockade, to economically strangle my homeland, to undermine the sovereignty of third States and to violate the freedom of trade and navigation, to the detriment of the most fundamental principles of international law.

But there is more: if this is a case of bilateral relations, then there are two blockaded peoples, that of Cuba and that of the United States. North Americans are denied an economic opportunity that would benefit them; they are denied access to the scientific advances that already guarantee the prevention and cure of diseases such as meningitis, retinitis pigmentosa, hepatitis B and vitiligo, among other achievements of our science. The right to travel freely to any place, which their Constitution confers on all citizens, is also infringed upon.

The blockade's effect on my people is even more inhuman. We are prevented from purchasing drugs essential for health; our ability to acquire resources to meet the needs for our material and social well-being is curtailed; our peace and daily life is threatened. The generation to which I belong was born and grew up under the blockade's siege. To live in a sovereign and steadfast country is a crime for which two million children may have to pay with their lives.

We affirm before the peoples of the world that there will be no possible absolution for those who commit or support this genocide, because "to condone a crime is tantamount to committing it". If against all logic our right were to be denied, if aggressive forces were to prevail over reason, Cubans will nevertheless always maintain their unshakeable faith in victory. We love life, and life is freedom, independence, sovereignty. We demand that the path we have chosen be respected. It is not our desire to be a model for anyone, but we will never accept either imposition or force.

I know that my words will be understood in different ways, but I have said what our conscience as free human beings dictates. My words may be applauded as a matter of solidarity, courtesy or obligation, but I know that there are many who wish us to be successful, for that is what they hope for themselves.

To you, Mr. President, I am thankful for having allowed me to express the feelings of a worthy people.

Mr. AL-NUAIMI (United Arab Emirates) (*interpretation from Arabic*): On behalf of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates, it gives me great pleasure to extend to you our sincere congratulations on your election as President of the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly. We are fully confident that your vast experience in the area of international relations will enhance the Organization's role and promote its goals.

I also wish to express our appreciation of the tireless efforts undertaken by your predecessor, Mr. Stoyan Ganev, in his judicious and capable management of the previous session.

It also gives me great pleasure to extend our sincere thanks to Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, for his dedication to the important responsibilities with which he has been entrusted and to commend his efforts aimed at enhancing the Organization's role in addressing the issues that concern the international community and in devising peaceful and just solutions to the problems of development and peace as well as the issues involved in maintaining regional and international security.

I should like also to welcome the countries that have acceded recently to the membership of the Organization and to wish them success and prosperity. There is no doubt that their presence among us accentuates further the universality of the United Nations and will contribute positively to the realization of our common goals and interests in consonance with the Charter.

On this occasion, I should like, on behalf of the people and Government of the United Arab Emirates, to extend our sincere condolences and profound sympathy to the people and Government of friendly India over the tragic loss of thousands of lives as a result of the recent earthquake.

This forty-eighth session of the General Assembly is convened against the backdrop of new political realities that have wrought dramatic changes in both regional and international relations. The most notable changes have been the diminished threat of nuclear war and an end to the problems that had plagued the international community since the creation of the United Nations as a result of the era of bipolarity and competition over spheres of influence. Although these changes have had a positive effect, the international arena has witnessed several new regional conflicts that have been generated by ethnic bigotry, religious fanaticism, expansionist tendencies and the spread of the phenomenon of terrorism, which is still sweeping over some parts of the world and which continues to pose a threat to peace and security at the regional and international levels. Given the existence of such a situation, it is incumbent on the international community as a whole to address these problems and to find effective solutions thereto in the interests of stability, development and abiding peace and in order to lay the foundations of the new world order to which all the countries of the world aspire so that they may be able to face up to the many major challenges that have come to confront humanity as a whole.

The role and responsibilities of the United Nations and especially those of the Security Council have expanded, since the end of the cold war, particularly in the areas of development and the maintenance of international peace and security. There is no doubt that the adoption by the General Assembly of the "Agenda for Peace" and other measures aimed at restructuring and revitalizing the Organization in the areas of economic and social development constitute a constructive, positive step towards the shouldering by the international community of its immense responsibilities in this regard. This will enhance the credibility of the United Nations and increase its ability to become a truly effective multi-purpose instrument in dealing with existing international issues.

We believe that within the new context of international relations, the restructuring and reform of the United Nations should embrace the Security Council as the organ responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security. In restructuring the Council, the principle of equitable geographical representation of all regional groups should be taken into consideration so that it may reflect the changes and transformations that have taken place in the international political arena. Those changes and transformations call for a new approach in addressing the issues of peace, security and development at the international level. Such an approach should stem from a sound understanding of the realities of an interdependent world so that it may enable the international community to find solutions that would go to the roots of old and new problems alike.

In this regard, we wish to stress that the issues of peacemaking and peace-keeping at both the regional and international levels in the context of preventive diplomacy should be addressed in a manner that takes into consideration the historical, geographical, political, social and cultural characteristics of each and every State. In so doing, the international community should keep in view the importance of coordination and cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, in the search for peaceful and commonly agreed solutions for existing conflicts and disputes, on the basis of international legality and the Charter of the United Nations.

The recent events in the Gulf in the wake of the liberation of the sister State of Kuwait have produced a new political reality which reinforced the belief in the importance of settling disputes by negotiation and other peaceful means as prescribed by the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, in the interests of building mutual trust and consolidating peace and security, as well as promoting stability, coexistence and good-neighbourliness between the States of the region.

Given our adherence to these principles in our relations with other States both regionally and internationally, the United Arab Emirates has declared its readiness and sincere desire to conduct a direct dialogue with the Islamic Republic of Iran with regard to Iran's occupation in 1971 of the three islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, which belong to the United Arab Emirates. From this rostrum, where many peace calls have been made, we appeal once again to the Islamic

Republic of Iran to respond positively to our call for dialogue and to start negotiating an end to this occupation and to return the three islands to the sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates.

The United Arab Emirates works jointly with other States members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, within a framework of cooperation and solidarity in defining its policies and its regional and international relations on the basis of existing geographic, political and economic realities, and in a manner that is consistent with its national interests and its Arab and Muslim identity. In their recent Summit meeting held in Abu Dhabi in December 1992, the leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council affirmed the importance of resorting to dialogue and negotiation as a principal instrumentality for settling disputes between States by peaceful means, in consonance with the tenets of Islamic Sharia as well as the commitment of the Gulf Cooperation Council to the Charter of the United Nations and to the norms and principles of international law.

Mrs. Osode (Liberia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The Gulf Cooperation Council also affirms the importance of respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, and non-interference in their internal affairs. We believe that every State is entitled to choose its own political system and to exercise sovereignty over its natural resources in line with its development objectives and environmental policies. We reject the use of force, or the threat of the use of force as a means of settling disputes. We hold that resorting to peaceful means in the settlement of disputes would enable the States involved to harness their resources in the interests of social and economic development.

The Iraqi regime still pursues a policy of procrastination with regard to the implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions. In view of this, the international community must oblige that regime to implement those resolutions to respect the political system, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the State of Kuwait and to refrain from reiterating its expansionist aims.

Security Council resolution 833 (1993) relating to the demarcation of boundaries between Kuwait and Iraq, guarantees the inviolability of the international boundaries separating the two countries in accordance with Chapter VII of the Charter. The resolution is a positive step and a fundamental international contribution towards achieving regional and international peace and stability.

We also urge the international community to pressure the Iraqi regime to abide by international humanitarian law and release immediately all Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti prisoners of war and detainees. An end should be put to this human tragedy which violates the basic norms of international humanitarian law.

At the same time, we should like to emphasize that it is imperative to maintain the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq and declare that the suffering and hardships endured by the Iraqi people are the responsibility of the Iraqi regime because of its refusal to implement fully all relevant Security Council resolutions.

The positive international developments resulting from the end of bipolarity and the collapse of military alliances were bound to produce their effects in our Arab region. Today, dialogue and cooperation between the big Powers, and the peaceful settlement of regional disputes, have replaced the confrontations of bipolarity.

The United Arab Emirates welcomed the convening of the Madrid Peace Conference and the holding of bilateral negotiations. It also welcomed the multilateral negotiations in which it participated. Likewise, it welcomed the declaration of principles concluded between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel as a positive beginning and a first step towards a just, comprehensive and durable settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Question of Palestine, on the basis of international legality as reflected in the relevant United Nations resolutions, most notably Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as the "land for peace" principle. Such a settlement should enable the Palestinian people to exercise their national inalienable rights, including the right of self-determination, and bring about a total Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories, including the Holy City of Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan.

We support the sustained efforts undertaken by the Lebanese Government to extend its national sovereignty over all the Lebanese national soil. In this regard, we call for the full implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978). This will contribute to the consolidation of peace and stability and to the creation of the conditions necessary for the social and economic development of the States and peoples of the region.

My country is extremely concerned over the deterioration of the security situation in the sister State of Somalia, which has resulted in many injuries and fatalities.

We support the efforts undertaken by the United Nations and regional organizations aimed at alleviating the suffering of the people of Somalia and creating a secure environment conducive to the continuation of aid and humanitarian relief programmes and the rebuilding of national infrastructures, particularly those relating to social and economic development.

In view of the strong historical ties between our people and the people of Somalia, the United Arab Emirates has extended humanitarian and financial assistance to that country, in addition to its participation in United Nations peace-keeping forces. We sincerely hope that all Somali factions, taking into account the interests of the people of Somalia, will cooperate, unite and reconcile in order to facilitate the United Nations mission in Somalia and resume negotiations and dialogue for the sake of achieving stability, peace and security in that country.

The people and Government of the United Arab Emirates have followed with deep sorrow the tragedy that has beset the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina for well over 18 months. My country has also condemned the acts of killing, displacement, ethnic cleansing, genocide and rape perpetrated by Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats who are supported by the regular army of Serbia and Montenegro. The victims of such atrocities have been largely the Bosnian Muslims. My country supports the Security Council and General Assembly resolutions relating to the trial and punishment of the perpetrators of war crimes in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The implementation of these resolutions will go a long way towards demonstrating that the international community honours its obligations and that the United Nations lives up to the Charter and principles of international law.

The partition plan recently proposed in the Geneva talks for the settlement of the dispute in Bosnia and Herzegovina lacks fairness and justice because it legitimizes aggression and "ethnic cleansing" and rewards the aggressors by allowing them to annex the territories they have conquered by force. In the face of this tragic situation, the international community bears the historical and moral responsibility of defending a State Member of the United Nations and preserving its independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and enabling it to exercise its legitimate right of self-defence.

The progress recently achieved in the recent negotiations between the political parties of South Africa, which culminated in a decision to form the Transitional Executive Council, represents a positive step towards establishing an interim Government and finalizing the arrangements for the elections to be held early next year. This progress may also be a significant step towards the formulation of a permanent constitution, which would lead to the establishment of a democratic and a united State free of racial discrimination.

One of the great challenges that still face the international community is the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons. This poses a grave threat to international peace and security; hence, it is the responsibility of the international community to encourage the adoption of confidence-building measures on the regional and international levels to create a secure international environment. We believe that the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is the key to strengthening all international efforts and regional initiatives aimed at preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction and removing the dangers that continue to threaten both regional and international peace and security.

In this regard, we welcome the positive steps recently taken in the field of disarmament, including the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, which was signed by the United Arab Emirates, as well as by a majority of the States of the world. We should also like to reaffirm the importance of establishing zones free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, including the Middle East.

Despite the progress achieved in the case of certain international political and social problems, we are yet to witness any noticeable improvement in the international economic environment. The gap between North and South is getting increasingly wider, and living conditions in many developing countries are constantly deteriorating under the heavy burden of foreign debt, the continuing decline in the price of commodities, and the terms of trade as well as the negative impact of protectionist policies on those countries' balances of payments. Given this situation, it has become the collective responsibility of the international community to restructure the existing international economic relations in a manner that would ensure effective cooperation in promoting economic development in many countries, especially in the developing world, and thereby to improve their living conditions.

Economic cooperation has expanded to new horizons, especially in the areas of development and environment. That was underscored by the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly through the creation of the high-level

Commission on Sustainable Development. This indicated that the international community is well aware of the nature of existing international problems and the importance of regional and international cooperation in achieving the goals of peace and development.

The member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have played an active role in the field of regional and international economic cooperation through the constructive and practical positions they have adopted and through their contributions and assistance to the developmental efforts of many third world countries. This stance stems from the Gulf Cooperation Council countries' belief in the principles of economic cooperation between States, and especially with the sisterly Arab and Islamic States. When measured against the gross national product, the percentage of aid extended by the GCC countries to developing countries is greater than that provided by the developed countries, even though the economies of the GCC countries are based primarily on oil, a depletable resource. These contributions have been made despite the need of all our countries to devote all their energies to the process of rebuilding and maintaining their social and economic infrastructures that have been adversely affected by the wars and disputes of the last two decades.

The spirit of tolerance and commitment to human values and to the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter should guide us on the road to the better future that we all aspire after - a future that looks more attainable than ever before, in view of the regional and international changes that have taken place over the past few years. All States, big and small, developed and developing, must seize this historic opportunity to build on the momentum of change in order that peaceful dialogue may prevail, consolidating the foundations of regional and international peace and security and peaceful coexistence.

Mr. AL-SHARA (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure on behalf of the delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic to congratulate Ambassador Insanally on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session. I take this opportunity also to commend the role of his friendly country in the Non-Aligned Movement and the positive contribution to the United Nations made by the friendly countries of Latin America.

I should also like on this occasion to voice our esteem to the President of the Assembly at its forty-seventh session, Mr. Stoyan Ganev, for the success he achieved during that session. We extend to him and to the friendly country of Bulgaria all best wishes for progress and prosperity.

I wish also to welcome the new Member States that have joined our international Organization. It is our hope that they will make a contribution to the work of the United Nations with their active input.

The end of the cold war has faced the international community with immense challenges and substantive questions most of which have remained without satisfactory answers while others have been left to the judgement of history and to the vagaries of time. It has become clear to many people in various parts of the world that facing up to these new challenges has not been an easy task for any individual country, regardless of its power or wisdom.

The international climate has been rendered yet more complex and difficult by the reactions of those who have considered themselves to be the victors of the cold war. Their reactions have reflected their narrow short-term interests rather than the elements of the new reality which would have served better both their long-term interests and those of other countries - or which, in the very least, would not have done harm to those interests.

This is one of the basic reasons which, to date, have prevented the emergence of a new world order. It was not reasonable to expect the countries and peoples of the world to support a system in which they have no say and from which they have no tangible expectations. This might explain why from one day to the next and year after year there has been less talk and lower expectations of the emergence of a new world order on the ruins of the old order.

On today's international scene we see little construction and few new breakthroughs; we see many ruins, much chaos and numerous unanswered questions. Has the world of today become more secure and stable? Have the causes of social tension and the many forms of regional conflict receded? Has the number of refugees and displaced persons decreased? And has the life of ordinary people in the South, and even in the North, grown more prosperous or comfortable?

These are legitimate questions, but detailing the answers before this Assembly will not be a source of joy or comfort to many of us, especially in view of conflagrations in various parts of the world which warn of increased human suffering, ranging from killing and

deportation to "ethnic cleansing", and real hunger. Of such things, world public opinion knows but very little. Suffice it to say that the number of conflicts which figure on the agenda of the United Nations is far smaller than those which are queuing up in the wings.

When we say this, however, we do not wish to give the impression, by such a graphic objective description of the new international situation, that the past was better than the present. Far from it. For such is not the logic of my country, Syria. Nor is it the logic of life, itself which, we believe, tends to move towards the better, inevitably and as a matter of necessity, even if it sometimes stumbles here and there or appears to be static at certain times.

Our real aim in describing the post-cold-war international situation is to attempt a serious assessment that, we truly believe, we share with many other countries which aspire to correct the course of international relations in both the political and the economic spheres, in order to make them more democratic and equitable.

In this context, we find no better framework than the United Nations to promote international dialogue and cooperation. In order for such dialogue to have positive and fruitful results in the interest of all concerned, it is necessary to introduce democratic reforms that would restructure the decision-making process in the Organization so that it may reflect the views of the majority. It is not reasonable, for instance, to allow the United Nations machinery to be manipulated, sometimes, in order to intervene in the internal affairs of countries under one pretext or another, before the Member States themselves are given the chance to introduce the necessary reforms that would restructure the United Nations in such a way as to guarantee equitable representation in its main organs and prevent the use of selectivity and double standards in addressing the issues that are of vital importance to Member States.

But how can the majority of Member States expect that such needed reforms of the structure of the United Nations would be introduced at a time when some countries that pride in ending the cold war resort to launching covert and overt cold wars against countries which would preserve their independence and stand up for their national sovereignty? We feel it is our duty to draw attention to the fact that failure to introduce the required reforms will render the United Nations incapable of addressing the regional conflicts that multiply daily. It is to be feared is that the important role of this international Organization might change in the course of time to one of dealing with the problems of tens of thousands of United Nations soldiers entrusted with the mission of preserving a lost peace. This would drain the Organization's resources and distract it from the many tasks with which it is entrusted.

The multifarious feelings of concern prevailing among most peoples in the world, particularly in developing countries, are deeper than might at first be apparent. We, as Arabs and Muslims, might well have become more sensitive than others recently regarding what seems to be designed to undermine our interests and distort our history, which, during its most glorious phase, was never racial or aggressive towards other peoples and religions. Rather, it was humane and civilized, as all objective Western historians attest.

We have the right to wonder about the reasons behind the ongoing unjust campaign against the Arabs and Muslims, who are slandered merely because some individuals have allegedly committed a terrorist act against Western targets, while not a word is uttered against those who are truly responsible for terroristic acts against thousands of Arab victims both in the occupied territories and southern Lebanon. The time has indeed come for an awakening of the Western conscience and for addressing objectively the sensitive issues which affect the dignity of peoples and the sovereignty of States. The objectivity of the strong cannot possibly be interpreted or understood, by any ethical standard, as a concession offered to the other party. Rather it often promotes the strong's status and prestige.

It is well known to everyone in the world that the Arab-Israeli conflict is one of the oldest, most complex and most dangerous conflicts in the world. That is why the United Nations has been seized of it since it first started. It is also no secret to anyone who follows developments in the region that Syria, under the leadership of President Hafez al Assad, maintained for 20 years its deeply rooted belief in the necessity of establishing a just and comprehensive peace in the region on the basis of United Nations resolutions and international legality.

Although many peace initiatives were put forward during the 1970s and 1980s in an attempt to address the Arab-Israeli conflict, Syria objected to those initiatives only because the solutions they proposed lacked comprehensiveness and because they ignored participation by the Palestinians and lacked the guarantees that would safeguard their national rights. Once it received American guarantees for the participation of the Palestinians and a

comprehensive solution on all fronts in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and the land-for-peace formula, Syria has played a positive and fundamental role in the long and arduous negotiations with the United States over the convening of a peace Conference in Madrid.

By responding positively to the American initiative, Syria, as the whole world has acknowledged, made the convening of a peace Conference possible. In so doing, Syria acted on the basic of its deep conviction that, or order for peace to be acceptable to our peoples, it has to be a just, comprehensive peace that would result in returning return all the Arab occupied territories and ensuring stability and security for the whole region. Without such elements, peace can neither survive nor become a true and stable peace in which and with which the people of the region can coexist. For any peace to receive broad and continued popular support, it must be honourable for us as well as for the others. The sons and mothers of our martyrs must feel that their dear ones who fell in the battlefields also contributed to establishing this peace on the basis of right and justice, and that with their sacrifices and blood they saved the nation from being forced to capitulate.

Syria, which consistently believed in a just and comprehensive peace and demonstrated its earnestness and determination to reach such peace through the Washington talks and the constant coordination with the Arab parties and co-sponsors, is, in fact, more serious and keen in its efforts to achieve peace than those who deviated from the path of Arab coordination and through their unilateral signing opened the doors of the region to all kinds of options. Unless serious and urgent efforts are made to achieve substantive and tangible progress on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks, peace might be the weakest of those options.

We in Syria do not exaggerate the value of this Palestinian-Israeli agreement because each and every one of its provisions needs new negotiations. At the same time, we do not underestimate its probable repercussions, especially on the Palestinian arena, where it has created sharp divisions. Regardless of all this, however, we think that the most serious threat the peace process faces lies in Israel's attempts to give the impression that the signing of this agreement has achieved peace in the region, and that the international community, and particularly Arab countries, must behave accordingly.

The judgement of history on the Palestinian-Israeli agreement since the secret Oslo talks has become the responsibility of the Palestinian people and their institutions. No one should think that Syria is going to obstruct this agreement, nor does Syria need to do so. But at the same time, no one should expect that Syria is going to prevent the Palestinians from criticizing the agreement, while the Israeli Prime Minister has not been able to prevent Israeli opposition from doing so despite his repeated assurances that he has made no concession to the Palestinians.

Yet in spite of all this, Israel still claims that it needs enough time to digest the Israeli-Palestinian agreement in a blatant attempt to evade the serious follow-up of the peace process launched in Madrid two years ago. In the meantime, the international community, the United States at the fore, has seen the necessity of capitalizing on the momentum generated by this agreement to continue the peace process on other tracks, particularly on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks.

The Arab States have also stressed, in the communiqué issued at the meeting of their Foreign Ministers in Cairo on 20 September 1993, that this first step:

> "must be completed by urgent steps on all tracks and must guarantee the withdrawal of Israel from all the occupied Syrian Golan and from the Lebanese lands ... for the Arab League Council believes that, for peace in the Middle East to be lasting, it has to be just and comprehensive and must be based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and on international legality."

Peace cannot be built on lands under occupation, nor can it be achieved through the usurpation of the rights of others. Those who are trying to make people believe that the Middle East has suddenly been transformed into an oasis of peace and prosperity know better than anyone that peace, stability and prosperity cannot possibly coexist with occupation, arrogance and the denial of the rights of others.

It is about time Israel stopped misleading world opinion and portraying itself as a victim. Is it reasonable that a country should continue to claim that it is the victim while it continues to produce and stockpile the most sophisticated of weapons, including all kinds of weapons of mass-destruction, and continues to occupy the lands of others by force, in defiance of United Nations resolutions?

My country, Syria, which declares its positions candidly and clearly to the whole world without fear of blame, will not give up an inch of its occupied territories. It is committed to continuing the peace process in earnest and is also committed to doing all that is required of it in compliance with Security Council resolutions 242 (167) and 338 (1973), as well as the "land for peace" formula. Syria will also continue to work with the co-sponsors of the peace process with a view to achieving a genuine, just and comprehensive peace so that the Middle East may indeed become an oasis of peace, stability and prosperity.

Mr. VELAYATI (Islamic Republic of Iran) *(spoke in Persian; English text furnished by the delegation)*: I should like, before making my statement, to express the deepest condolences of the people and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the people and the Government of India on the catastrophic earthquake that has caused untold human suffering.

Allow me, at the outset, to express sincere congratulations to Ambassador Insanally of Guyana on his well-deserved election as President of the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session. His personal qualifications and diplomatic experience are valuable assets, which must be utilized fully and seriously to further the purposes of the United Nations. I wish to assure the President of my delegation's unreserved cooperation in this common endeavour.

I should like also to welcome the new Members of the Organization and to express the hope that their participation in this body will enhance its universality and strengthen the spirit of universality and international cooperation. As international relations are currently undergoing tumultuous and decisive change, the presence here of representatives of the overwhelming majority of nation States provides the General Assembly at this session with a unique opportunity to shape a better future and an international environment more in keeping with the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Of course, such a rare opportunity is accompanied by a grave and historic responsibility for every one of us. We must acquire a full understanding of the transitional nature of international relations in the world of today, and, relying on our vast collective resources and potential, we must prevent the resurgence and prevalence of the crises, wars, injustices and human misery that have marred the first 50 years of the United Nations.

If, on the eve of its fiftieth anniversary, we are to ensure a more dynamic and successful future for the Organization, we must undertake a sober reassessment of our record and identify our achievements as well as our shortcomings and obstacles. Regrettably, five years after the end of the cold war, some of that era's most negative characteristics are still evident in international relations.

Expansionism and the urge to dominate, disregard for the material, cultural and moral values of nations, the suppression of democracy and of democratic institutions, and the triumph of the short-sighted interests of the dominant few over the interests and aspirations of the majority and over human rights and the United Nations Charter and international law continue to impede international affairs and, most regrettably, international organizations. This has presented the United Nations with a historic challenge: to maintain and enhance its perceived role and its credibility following the Persian Gulf crisis. Moreover, despite the cessation of military rivalry between major Powers, many complex and grave threats - including those arising from ethnic tensions, the lack of development, poverty, economic and social inequality and degradation of the environment - have taken humanity to the edge of the abyss.

During the era of the cold war, relations between East and West - and, consequently, international relations in general - were founded on misconceptions, mutual mistrust and a total lack of confidence. These factors played a central role in the creation of an unsafe world, in which the United Nations was deprived of any opportunity to realize its vast potential for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Therefore, our first and foremost obligation is to identify and root out the causes of crisis and mistrust inherited from the cold war and to take appropriate steps to create the conditions necessary to the promotion of understanding and the fostering of mutual confidence at the international level.

This should begin with an all-out campaign of steps to restore world confidence in the United Nations. A balanced, objective and far-sighted approach to various international political, economic and cultural crises and challenges, based on justice and on the common principles and objectives enshrined in the Charter, is the most fundamental requirement for the restoration and enhancement of the credibility of the Organization, and can also play a significant role in securing long-term stability and trust. In this context, the identification, definition and

deepening of shared values and common interests will facilitate understanding and ensure international cooperation.

Should we fail in adopting such an approach, countries will be forced into a security dilemma created by unacceptable survival options: namely, either to strengthen their military capabilities and thus precipitate an arms race or to succumb to expansionist Powers and their whims. In either case, the world will plunge into a new era of insecurity and turbulence.

The Security Council plays a determining role in either heightening such a dilemma or reversing it. In other words, the Council may either exacerbate tension and distrust or encourage understanding, confidence and respect for the rule of law in inter-State relations.

If the behaviour of the Security Council signifies an unequivocal commitment to uphold justice and the principles of the Charter, to combat aggression and to come to the help of the victims, and if the Council exhibits the political will to cease the application of double - standards, then we can hope that potential aggressors will be deterred, international instability and insecurity will be curtailed, and the immense human cost of wars and hostilities will be avoided.

On the other hand, when, owing to political calculations, some aggressions and international crimes meet with the indifference and acquiescence of the Security Council; when the criteria for resort to forcible measures envisaged in Chapter VII of the Charter are the short-lived political interests of Powers; when aggressions and attempts to annihilate an entire nation do not receive a forcible, resolute response, while in other cases there is a rush to resort to force before attempting to understand and deal with the root causes of a conflict; and, finally, when some decisions of the Council are enforced with vigour and determination while others remain dead letters for years; then no one can expect potential aggressors or possible victims of foreign expansionism to form a reliable expectation with regard to the reaction of the Security Council. Thus, having removed the credibility of the deterrence factor, we should expect nothing but the persistence of aggression and expansionism and the exacerbation of the ensuing horrific human tragedies, inevitably leading to undesirable implications for the authority and credibility of the United Nations.

The failure of the Security Council squarely to face the Palestinian crisis and the constant aggressions against the Palestinian people, Lebanon and Syria, not to mention its intentional failure to enforce its own resolutions, are a sad illustration of the prevailing preference of political interests over peace, security, international law and equity. Relying on the support of a number of powerful States, Israel has with impunity totally disregarded pertinent Security Council resolutions, unabatedly pursued a militaristic policy, persisted in aggression and expansionism and avoided any commitment to international nuclear non-proliferation regimes. It is the only possessor of nuclear weapons in the region. It has systematically and grossly violated the most elemental human rights of the Palestinian people and employed terrorism in all its forms as an official policy. These are facts, borne out by history and solidly based on objective international observations and internationally documented evidence. Israel's well orchestrated misinformation campaign against others and its attempts to fan the flames of discord, distrust and division among States in the region cannot conceal these facts, nor should they legitimize the unrealistic, short-sighted and imposed plans as solutions or mechanisms to return peace and stability to the region.

In our view, peace, stability and mutual confidence can return to the Middle East and to the Holy Land of Peace and Revelation only through a serious and even-handed treatment of these realities and the full restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. Based on these objective historical realities, the recent accord, notwithstanding the international fanfare, does not present a realistic solution to the root causes of the conflict, does not promise restoration of Palestinian rights, and thus cannot establish justice, which is the only foundation of a lasting peace. And no one can cede Palestine on behalf of the Palestinian people or Al-Quds Al-Sharif on behalf of the Muslims. We consider the signing of this accord as a conspiracy against Islam and Palestine, and we disagree with it.

The unfolding human tragedy in Bosnia and Herzegovina is yet further disturbing evidence of the consequences of the Security Council's acquiescence in aggression, and failure resolutely to tackle the causes of the abhorrent attempt to annihilate an entire nation. In the face of aggression, genocide, rape and indiscriminate murder in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Security Council, ignoring repeated calls by the General Assembly, has failed to fulfil its international responsibility and has even deprived the victims of the means to defend themselves. The Council, prevented from action by the illusions and imaginary interests of a number of its permanent members, can certainly not justify this approach by hiding behind the

convenient excuse of the existence of civil war. That excuse is unacceptable, at the least because of the fact that the very same Council, in a much more complex situation of civil strife in Somalia - where the identification of victim and culprit is far more difficult - has not only acted but has practically given total management of a United Nations operation to a single country, which, motivated by its own perceived interests, has undertaken massive operations whose main victims are, ironically, the same innocent and deprived people for whose help and protection the operation ostensibly started.

Now that, owing to the lack of serious action by the international community, the Bosnian Muslims have been forced into unbalanced negotiations under military and, unfortunately, diplomatic duress, it is imperative for the Assembly and the Security Council to take appropriate measures to guarantee the viability of the Government and Muslim people of Bosnia. The lifting of the arms embargo against the Bosnian Government and strengthening the defensive capabilities of the Bosnian Muslims are, in our view, the most effective guarantees for the durability of any peaceful settlement and the prevention of future aggressions. Furthermore, reiteration of the principles which should underlie any peaceful settlement in Bosnia and Herzegovina is necessary to induce or, if necessary, to compel the aggressors to participate seriously in negotiations for a lasting and acceptable solution. They include, most particularly, the establishment of a durable cease-fire; the lifting of the siege of cities; unhindered access to humanitarian assistance; the rejection of acquisition of territory by force or ethnic cleansing; the necessity for the evacuation of territories thus occupied; the recognition of the right of the people and Government of Bosnia to seek and receive compensation and reparations; the honourable and safe repatriation of refugees; and individual responsibility for war crimes.

In the light of these recent unfortunate experiences and in order to enhance the credibility of the United Nations, particularly in the crucial area of peace and security, it is imperative to review and reconsider the behaviour, operational framework and rules of procedure of the Security Council. There should be no room for undemocratic practices, hidden agendas, a lack of transparency or indifference to the views of the international community, as reflected in the General Assembly. It should never be forgotten that it is the entire membership - represented only in the General Assembly - which, to quote Article 24 of the Charter,

> "In order to ensure prompt and effective action by the United Nations ... [has conferred] on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security".

The Council acts, in the words of Article 24, on "behalf" of the membership. Its powers emanate from that role and not from any inherent right. Therefore, it is accountable to the entire membership gathered in the General Assembly. In today's international climate, the primacy of political interests and their tendency to overshadow the interests of the public has generated grave concerns about the Council's ability to take "prompt and effective action". The General Assembly must therefore fully and deliberately exercise its prerogatives in this regard as the highest organ of the United Nations.

Confidence-building measures by the United Nations should not be limited only to the realm of international peace and security. Indeed, a multi-dimensional approach is necessary to root out the seeds of tension and mistrust sown in the previous era. In this context, it is most important to take positive, comprehensive and objective steps for international promotion and protection of human rights and democratic institutions, for controlling and reducing armaments, for combating the drug menace, for protecting the environment, for eradicating poverty, for improving the deteriorating economic plight of the South and for engendering sustainable development. Success in these areas would not only enhance the credibility and authority of the Organization, but would also remove the most tangible causes of mistrust and tension in the world at large.

In spite of significant achievements in the international campaign to promote respect for the exalted worth of the human person and the realization and attainment of the moral and material rights of that masterpiece of creation, formidable challenges continue to persist in the task of ensuring respect for the most basic rights of millions of human beings: the right to life and the right to a minimum of moral and material welfare. The World Conference on Human Rights, recently held in Vienna, provided a valuable opportunity for the world community to take stock of its achievements and shortcomings in the quarter of a century following the first such conference, held in Tehran in 1968. The Conference addressed vital issues, such as respect for the moral, cultural and religious values of all nations, the indivisibility of all human rights, and the rejection of selectivity, application of double-standards and the political manipulation of human rights. While not ideal, the work

of the Conference can play a constructive role in enhancing international protection and promotion of human rights and the progressive development of human-rights norms.

In the logic of the divine religions - and particularly Islam, which pioneered the campaign to respect and value the exalted worth of the human being as God's Vice-Regent on Earth - human rights are vested in the human nature bestowed upon mankind by the Almighty Creator. Hence, not only are they universal and independent of geographical and temporal boundaries, but they do not have their origin in conventions. Therefore, their definition, codification, implementation and international promotion and protection cannot be considered the private domain of the few who enjoy temporary political and military superiority. That is particularly true as those States do not have a shining record in internal or external protection of human rights and do not offer in their own social experience a suitable moral and material environment for the welfare of human beings. If violence and crime, which deprive the most vulnerable segments of society of their right to life and dignity - I refer here to the drug menace, prostitution, pornography, rape, violence and other forms of abuse of women, the disintegration of families, profanity and vulgarity as well as debasing of social relations - are at least the byproducts of the human-rights model advocated, or indeed imposed, by that group, then others certainly have the right to examine the prototype critically before importing it.

The universality of human rights is the very opposite of arrogating to oneself the task of setting the standards for human rights and of judging their observance by others, particularly since even these standards are not promoted universally and across the board, but are, rather, resorted to when and if the exigencies of foreign policy and economic and security interests require it.

Human rights and the inherent worth of the human person are too important to be subjugated to short-lived political considerations and interests or used as a lever for political or cultural pressure or for maintaining the inequity between the South and the North. That can only erode their credibility and universal acceptance. We hope that political will and responsible behaviour by all countries, specifically the countries of the North, will preclude a selective approach to the Vienna Declaration and enable the international community to employ its collective potential to reach common understanding in this area and initiate a truly universal campaign for the promotion and protection of human rights.

Another vestige of the cold-war era, which constitutes an elemental cause of international mistrust and a general lack of confidence, is the arms race and the development, production, build-up and use of weapons, particularly weapons of mass destruction - all in the misplaced hope of enhancing national security.

The conclusion of the comprehensive Convention on chemical weapons, notwithstanding its shortcomings, was a historic achievement. Iran, the most recent victim of the large-scale use of chemical weapons, actively contributed in the drafting process, was among the sponsors of the relevant resolution in the General Assembly, and was among the first signatories of this important international instrument. The effectiveness and universality of the Convention will be a function of the way in which it is implemented and of the degree of commitment of its signatories.

Naturally, with the conclusion of this Convention, the existing informal regimes which impose discriminatory barriers on free trade in the chemical industry have lost their *raison d'être* and must be dismantled. The lingering of these regimes not only violates the spirit of the Convention and the understandings reached during the process of its finalization, but also nullifies the positive incentives for acceding to that instrument. The same applies to unilateral and illegal measures such as the disruption of the free navigation of the Chinese vessel *Yinhe*, in the Persian Gulf, on the pretext - subsequently proven false - that it was carrying prohibited chemical substances. Such actions can only lead to the erosion of the authority and credibility of the Convention.

International efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons face a similar danger. Politically motivated and unfounded accusations against signatory States which are committed to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons simply undermine that important instrument and lead to international mistrust and the escalation of the arms race. Before any decision on the extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1995, the process leading to the Review Conference should be fully utilized in order seriously to assess the Treaty's record during the past two decades in the light of its overall objective of totally eliminating nuclear weapons. The shortcomings and obstacles hindering progress towards this goal should be identified and dealt with during the Conference in 1995.

Among the most essential and useful strategies for attaining global disarmament and strengthening the

non-proliferation regime is the creation of zones free from nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction in various parts of the world. In the light of the constant support of the United Nations for the establishment of a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East, an idea initiated by Iran in 1974, it is necessary to take constructive and practical measures towards establishing such a zone. The institutionalization of regional confidence-building measures, including placement of all facilities and installations under the safeguards mechanism of the International Atomic Energy Agency and accession by all regional States to all international disarmament instruments, particularly the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the chemical weapons Convention, constitute the most important elements for the establishment of a zone free from nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

Furthermore, the reckless build-up of conventional weapons has not only devoured much needed resources, but also reinforced the atmosphere of mistrust and anxiety. Different areas have, as a result, become fair ground for political, economic and commercial exploitation by countries and companies that manufacture weapons. The decision of the General Assembly to establish a Register of Conventional Arms Transfers constitutes a positive first step which should be strengthened and further refined.

However, it is evident that transparency in armaments cannot by itself control horizontal or vertical proliferation of conventional weapons in the world. Therefore, what is really necessary, globally and particularly in the Middle East, is serious and genuine international cooperation for the comprehensive, non-selective, non-discriminatory, balanced and effective reduction of conventional arms. This may be realized, *inter alia*, through the reduction of military budgets, of weapons procurement and of the presence of foreign forces in different regions. The Islamic Republic of Iran has been cited by impartial international sources as the country with the lowest defence budget in the region and the fewest weapons purchases. As such, Iran is naturally prepared to engage constructively in any serious, practical and non-sensational collective effort in this regard.

Above and beyond all these steps, it is most essential to generate the necessary political will to formulate and direct national policies geared towards fostering an international atmosphere of mutual confidence. This can be realized only by basing national policies on a commitment to the rules and principles of international law, particularly respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of others; the inviolability of internationally recognized boundaries; rejection of the threat or use of force for the settlement of disputes; non-interference in the internal affairs of others; and refraining from advancing unfounded claims against the territory of other States. The positive impact of such an approach on promoting good-neighbourly relations, encouraging regional cooperation and the enhancement of security is self-evident.

Consistent with its national and strategic interests, and cognizant of its heavy responsibility in this region, the Islamic Republic of Iran has historically acted as the force for stability in the Persian Gulf region. Domestically, the greatest part of the national budget has been allocated to economic, social and cultural development projects and reconstruction. The policy of converting military industries to civilian use and employing the armed forces in the reconstruction sector has been vigorously pursued. Thus, despite serious obstacles, fundamental progress has been achieved in across-the-board development of the country and reconstruction of war-damaged property. Similarly, in order to help foster regional confidence and trust, and in spite of sensitive regional conditions and the bitter experience of a recent foreign aggression against the Islamic Republic of Iran, we have allocated a mere 1.5 per cent of the national budget for defence and have had the lowest military purchases in the entire region.

Externally, Iran has formulated its policy with a view to encouraging and promoting security and stability in the region, as well as expanding political, economic, cultural and scientific cooperation between the countries of the area. The position of principle adopted by Iran in the course of the Persian Gulf crisis; our constant effort to prevent the spread of violence in the region; our even-handed and consistent emphasis on international understanding and compromise in Afghanistan and Tajikistan; our attempts to secure a peaceful settlement in the Caucasus; our being host to the highest number of refugees in the world; and the humanitarian assistance extended by Iran to victims of crisis in the region; these are all consistent with our policy of strengthening stability, preventing tension and mitigating the human suffering of the crisis victims in the region. We firmly believe that the pursuit of these efforts, along with consultations and cooperation between concerned States and international organizations, is required to contain and settle these conflicts and alleviate their ensuing human tragedies.

To ensure peace and stability in Central Asia and the Transcaucasus, it is necessary to encourage trade with the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus, create the right

conditions for economic development in each country, reinforce regional commonalities and complementarities, and improve the opportunities for these countries to participate more profitably in world trade. The efforts of the members of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) to achieve these goals and to overcome obstacles to regional development by consolidating mutual cooperation and fostering cooperation with other countries and international organizations will contribute positively to regional and international peace and security. Formal collaboration between ECO and the United Nations, which requires approval by the Assembly of ECO's request for observer status, will also expedite the realization of these objectives.

The vital importance of the Persian Gulf for the security and economic development of the Islamic Republic of Iran is self-evident. Iran, with the longest coast on the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, has historically equated its own national security and economic prosperity with security, stability, tranquillity and the free flow of oil and international commerce in the Persian Gulf area. It has thereby acted as a force for stability. In this context, we have also proposed the establishment of regional security and cooperation arrangements in the Persian Gulf, whose outline I presented to the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly. The experience of two devastating wars in the Persian Gulf region within one decade clearly illustrates the fact that baseless territorial claims lead to the erosion of understanding and confidence, only furthering the interest of foreign Powers.

The common religious, cultural, historical and commercial heritage of the countries of this region provide a good and solid foundation on which initiatives to reinforce mutual trust and develop multilateral cooperation between these States can be founded. The Islamic Republic of Iran has taken the initiative by manifesting its political will and adopting practical measures in order to strengthen political ties and further develop and consolidate commercial, economic and cultural cooperation with our neighbours in the Persian Gulf. In turn, we would welcome and respond accordingly to any positive step from our neighbours.

Let me conclude by reiterating that recent international developments and emerging challenges have placed the United Nations at a critical and historic crossroads. Success, in our view, will depend on a sober understanding of the causes of tension and mistrust during the cold war, followed by resolute steps to root them out. Joint effort is also needed to develop and put into motion multidimensional confidence-building measures and techniques, consolidate and expand international cooperation, and bring about conditions conducive to the attainment of common aspirations of humanity, particularly justice, security and balanced development. The Islamic Republic of Iran is fully prepared to intensify its efforts in cooperation with other States in this Assembly and in other bilateral and multilateral environments for the attainment of these objectives.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.